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Vitamin A the Vegetable Way

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Broadcast by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, and Wallace Kadderly, Radio Service, in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, May 25, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

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WALLACE KADDERLY: Now, Ruth Van Deman with some more information on that very-much-talked-about subject of the day ... food.

RUTH VAN DEMAN: Have you noticed that too, Wallace, ... how much more people are talking about food these days?

KADDERLY: I have ... Food has about superseded the weather as a filler-inner in conversation.

VAN DEMAN: The weather has a lot to do with the kind of food I'm going to talk about right now ... green and yellow vegetables out of the Victory garden.

KADDERLY: You're right it does. No sunshine, no rain, no good garden sass.

VAN DEMAN: But we have them all three ... sunshine, rain, and good garden sass. In fact, some Victory gardeners are almost worried about having more garden sass than they know what to do with.

KADDERLY: Sure they aren't counting their carrots before they sprout?

VAN DEMAN: Some are, probably. That's human nature. But cancelling out the mistakes, millions of tons of vegetables will come from Victory gardens this summer. And I have some important facts here for all vegetable eaters ... comforting facts they are, too, for any Victory gardener who may not have a canner to can with, or a root cellar to store the surplus from his garden.

KADDERLY: Good. Let's have these facts.

VAN DEMAN: The nutrition experts say ... eat your Victory garden and enjoy it while each vegetable is at its prime. Your body will store up vitamin A for the future from the extra servings of green and yellow vegetables.

KADDERLY: You mean we can build a kind of vitamin bank this summer to draw on next winter?

VAN DEMAN: Yes, I mean just that. Vitamin A is the vitamin the body can store for at least 5 or 6 months ahead. But here's the catch to it. You store vitamin A for the future only when your daily diet gives you more than you use up every day.

KADDERLY: How much vitamin A does an average person - say a fellow like me - need every day?

VAN DEMAN: Around 5,000 units.

KADDERLY: And how do I know how many units of vitamin A I'm getting out of a serving of turnip greens or carrots?

VAN DEMAN: You could consult a vitamin table and add up the units. But that's carrying it to a very fine point ... finer than you need to for everyday eating. The rough-and-ready rule has been: Eat at least one green or yellow vegetable every day. But that was geared to peacetimes. Then we were getting more vitamin A than we're getting now from butter, cream, fortified margarine, egg yolk, liver, salmon, and foods of that type. Also, when we get our vitamin A the vegetable way, we have to eat two or three times as many vegetables to get the same amount of vitamin A as we would from butter or one of those other foods I've just mentioned.

KADDERLY: Why's that?

VAN DEMAN: Strictly speaking, we don't get true vitamin A from vegetables. We get carotene - a substance that we convert into vitamin A in the processes of digestion and nutrition.

KADDERLY: I see. And you say we can store up this vitamin A we convert from carotene in green and yellow vegetables for as much as six months ahead?

VAN DEMAN: At least that, and probably more.

KADDERLY: But what's the advantage?

VAN DEMAN: Just this. As we've said, each normal, healthy person needs about 5,000 units of vitamin A a day. Vitamin A, besides promoting growth in the young, helps all of us to keep mucous membranes in the body in good healthy condition. For instance if the linings of the nose and throat and sinuses are in tip-top condition, they resist infections better. So if we can store up extra vitamin A this summer when green and yellow vegetables are plentiful, it's like so much health insurance for next winter when our supplies of vitamin-A-rich foods may run a little short.

KADDERLY: I get it now. But here's another question. Are the green and yellow vegetables the only ones in the Victory garden that have this carotene we can convert into vitamin A?

VAN DEMAN: Almost, except for ripe tomatoes. In general, the deeper the green, or the more yellow-gold the part of the vegetable you eat, the more carotene to make vitamin A.

KADDERLY: Then yellow corn must have more than white corn.

VAN DEMAN: Right. White corn is nil as a source of vitamin A. So is white squash. But the yellow varieties rate high.

KADDERLY: And of course cooking must have a lot to do with how much vitamin A survives from Victory garden to dinner plate.

VAN DEMAN: Quite a lot, yes. Fortunately vitamin A stands the heat of cooking better than some of the other vitamins do. A good rule to follow to get

VAN DEMAN: (Cont'd) the good from all vegetables is: Cook quickly in as little water as possible. And season and serve so they taste good and look good. Victory garden vegetables deserve Victory cooking.

KADDERLY: What about those Bureau of Home Economics folders on cooking vegetables? Supply still holding out?

VAN DEMAN: I think so. The titles are Green Vegetables ... Root Vegetables. We'll be glad to send copies to any of our Farm and Home friends who send us a post card. Address the card Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Ask for recipes for Green Vegetables and Root Vegetables. And more vitamins to you.

